# the Alliance Report...

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## ROSEMERE

On Monday, January 11, the Office de la langue française decided to revoke the bilingual status of the town of Rosemère. This status is conferred on a municipality that has a non-francophone majority, using Section 113F of the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101).

Rosemère received this status in 1982, when the majority of its 5,000 citizens were English-speaking. According to the 1986 census, however, 66% of the residents are now French-speaking.

Rosemère is one of the 100 municipalities that has received the "113F" status. A municipality so named can post bilingual signs, and employees can communicate with each other in English

Alliance Quebec is gravely concerned by this decision. The "113F" status affords protection for school boards and health and social institutions as well as municipalities.

The Alliance sees this question as crucial to the survival of the English-speaking community's institutions. It believes that "113F" confers on these institutions an acquired right. Bilingual status should not be jeopardized each time a new census is published.

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As Alliance Quebec President Royal Orr wrote in a letter to Premier Bourassa, "the debate over Rosemère's status serves no one but those determined to fan the flames of linguistic discord. In fact this debate seems fruitless since 113F status in no way diminshes the rights accorded to the French-speaking citizens of Rosemère under the Charter of the French language."

The Alliance has obtained legal advice, and will contest the decision of the Office in the courts. The Town of Rosemère is also exploring legal alternatives. A decision concerning court action is expected the week of February 8.

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*The following is the text of a telegram sent by Royal Orr to Pierre Laporte, President of the Office de la langue française, concerning the bilingual status of Rosemère:*

Monsieur,

As you are aware, the Office de la langue française has decided to cancel the City of Rosemère's 113F status. We demand that the Office rescind this decision immediately.

Nothing in the Charter of French Language (Bill 101) gives the Office the power to remove the 113F status. As the law currently reads, 113F status appears to be an acquired right.

The Office's action is in our opinion an abuse of authority, in that the Office has clearly exceeded the powers granted to it by the law. Through its actions the Office has shown a total disregard for the elected officials.

Moreover, the Office's decision is clearly unjustifiable since 113F status in no way diminshes the rights accorded to the Francophone citizens of Rosemère under the Charter of the Franch Language. Revoking Rosemère's 113F status does not in any way promote the French language. Every municipality is obliged to provide its services in French, 113F status does not alter this obligation.

Alliance Quebec is prepard to take whatever measures prove necessary, including legal action, to reverse this inappropriate and divisive action.

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## DROP IN MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE QUEBEC PUBLIC SERVICE UNACCEPTABLE

Only 3.6 percent of Quebec public servants come from the minority communities. The latest study by the Government of Quebec shows a 16 percent drop in minority representation from a year ago when a similar study indicated that the cultural communities made up an already unacceptably low 4.3 percent of the public service. The same study showed that the English- speaking community represented less than one percent of the public service.

Reacting to the report entitled Présence des femmes, des hommes et des membres de groupes cibles dans la fonction publique du Québec, Alliance Quebec President Royal Orr said, "This report demonstrates clearly the inadequacy of existing measures to promote minority representation. Successive governments have recognized the problem, however, their actions have fallen far short of their promises. As early as 1972, studies showed that English-speaking Quebecers were less than one percent of the civil service -- that's still true. We clearly are not making any progress. This situation won't change until there is enough political will in the government to make it a priority".

Orr added, "I find it shocking that there are fewer than 400 English-speaking Quebecers in the public service. It is unacceptable that the English-speaking community and the cultural minorities which represent 20 percent of the population are virtually unrepresented in the public service. To respond effectively to the needs of Quebecers, the public service must reflect the diversity of our society. Lack of minority participation often reduces the responsiveness of government to the needs of these communities. An affirmative action programme is clearly needed to break this vicious circle, other measures simply haven't worked."

The provincial government is the largest employer in Quebec with over 52,000 permanent employees. The study undertaken by the government's Office of Human Resources states that there are only 1,891 members of the cultural communities in the public service. The government defines the members of the cultural communities as all non-francophones, those born outside Canada and the visible minorities. Those who work in Crown Corporations or in the para-public sectors (i.e. schools, hospitals, etc.) are not included in the study.

Mr. Orr concluded by saying "Alliance Quebec calls on the Government of Quebec to immediately adopt concrete measures to increase minority representation".

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## WELFARE REFORM NEGLECTS ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

Anita Sauber is tired of telling her children they'll have to do with less. She is a single parent of three, living on welfare in the Gaspé. She is unilingual English-speaking. The new welfare reforms will do nothing for her. She is not an exception.

Unilingual English-speaking people have traditionally been the most vulnerable members of our community. Studies such as Surfacing the Poor reveal that 17% of the English-speaking community of Montreal lives in poverty. Yet the government has never recognized the importance of French second language skills to employment in Quebec. Therefore, unilingual English-speaking Quebecers are condemned to live in want at the margin of our society. Not only does the present welfare reform ignore the needs of our community but may in fact make the situation worse.

A working knowledge of French is vital in today's job market. To offer only skills training while disregarding the need to help unilingual English-speaking persons acquire language skills calls into question the relevance of these proposed reforms for our community. If government efforts to increase the employability of welfare recipients is to be taken seriously, it cannot remain blind to the fact that lack of French is an important obstacle to employment for many members of our community.

What good will it do to teach a unilingual English-speaking person a skill if he cannot get a job because of his inability to speak French? Our society cannot afford to simply write these people off. We have an obligation to help them acquire the language skills necessary to work in today's Quebec. As we attempt to ensure that our schools provide adequate French second language skills, and that new immigrants have access to Centres d'orientation et de formation des immigrants (C.O.F.I) courses, we cannot allow unilingual English-speaking Quebecers, such as Anita Sauber, to fall between the cracks. The manpower department has an obligation which it has yet to meet.

The second problem with the proposed welfare reforms is the fact that they would link future welfare payments directly to the participation of the welfare recipient in work or study programmes.

There is every reason to believe that this emphasis will unintentionally discriminate against English-speaking welfare recipients. Alliance Quebec has for some time been aware of the critical lack of programmes available in the English language to help the chronically unemployed. Earlier this year, Alliance Quebec undertook, in cooperation with Communication-Québec, an extensive survey of provincial government services provided to the English-speaking community of Montreal. The problem of getting services from the manpower department was one of those highlighted by this study.

Whether the programme in question is a stage en milieu de travail, jeunes volontaires, travaux communautaires or the services externe de la main d'oeuvre, all are often not available in English to members of the English-speaking community. The proposed reforms effectively mean that not only will members of our community have fewer options to improve their chances to re-enter the work-force but, in addition, they will be financially penalized as a result of a situation beyond their control.

Those who run the few programmes aimed at helping the English-speaking chronically unemployed inform us that existing demands are so great that large numbers of young people are already being turned away. These reform proposals

will compound this problem by requiring Enligh-speaking welfare recipients to apply to existing programmes that are already over-burdened.

It is clear that a significant effort must be made to expand the availability of these programmes to members of our community. This is particularly true outside the Greater Montreal area, which has even fewer services in English. In the absence of such measures, people like Anita Sauber will be poorly served by these proposed reforms. The linkage of additional benefits to participation in these programmes has a clearly discriminatory effect.

If the interests of English-speaking Quebecers are not taken into account in the reform of the welfare system, they will be seriously jeopardized. Alliance Quebec has always believed that justice is the first duty of government. If the government fails to respond to the needs of our community, it will be creating injustice through indifference.

*(NOTE: Alliance Quebec will present its views to the committee studying welfare reform later this month. Copies of the brief are available from the Provincial office on request, and will be distributed to chapter offices.)*

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## ROYAL ORR RESPONDS TO CAMILLE LAURIN

Dear Sir,

Members of the English-speaking community read with anger your recent comments on the signs case and the use of the notwithstanding clause. By attacking the English-speaking community for what you termed its "Rhodesian attitudes", you resort to a tired, offensive rhetoric, and you retreat to a nastier period of our past. Your comments confirm how out of touch are with the realities of our society.

In the 1960s, Rhodesia ws universally condemned as a racist, extremist, colonialist oppressor, deserving of explusion from the international community of nations. And yet you use the term "Rhodesian attitudes" to denounced English-speaking Quebecers who simply believe that they should be free to use English and other languages on commercial signs in addition to French.

Comparisons between our community and Rhodesians were odious when they were made in the 1970s. In 1988, when great strides have been taken to promote the French language in Quebec, and when members of the English-speaking comunity have redoubled their efforts to learn French and participate fully in Quebec society, such statements only serve to resurrect ugly memories of darker days in the relationship between our communities. By perpetuating this kind of rhetoric, Dr. Laurin, you insult the English-speaking community, and you attempt to polarize our society.

In the same interview, (La Presse, January 11) you also criticize the fact that

certain court rulings, notably on the "Canada clause", have permitted some children to have access to English schools. You believe that these rulings threaten the protection of the French language in Quebec. For our community, which has seen its school enrolments drop by 57% since 1976, and which anticipates a further drop of 11% by 1991, your concerns are difficult to understand. Will you only be satisfied when there are no longer any children in the English school system, and the last English school has been closed?

The establishment of more harmonious relations between English-speaking and French-speaking Quebecers has been one of the central goals of Alliance Quebec. Our organization believes that solutions to the questions surrounding linguistic issues can be found, and that theses solutions must be rooted in democratic principles and based on sensitivity and mutual respect.

Alliance Quebec believes that a great deal of progress has been made in improving relations between the English-speaking and French-speaking communities. Much work remains to be done in the years ahead. It is our belief, however, that turning back the clock by issuing provocative and insulting comments contributes nothing to this progress.

You may not want to have an English-speaking community here, but we believe that the majority of Quebecers do. Quebecers are willing to work hard together to establish a prosperous and tolerant society. On behalf of Alliance Quebec, I call upon you to retract publicly the comments that you made, and apologize for your insult to 800,000 fellow Quebecers.

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## ALLIANCE QUEBEC CALLS FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN MUC

Alliance Quebec told members of an MUC advisory committee not to overlook the English-speaking community when designing affirmative action programmes. In its brief, presented to the Advisory Committee on Intercultural and Interracial Relations (ACIIR), the Alliance also added its voice to the groups demanding the implementation of affirmative action programmes for members of the cultural communities and visible minorities.

The Alliance was critical of the existing situation regarding minority representation. Alliance noted that "if the departments of the MUC reflect essentially the majority but not the minorities in Montreal, then it is fair to say that the MUC has not met its obligations as a public service." As a result, the MUC public service "can neither claim to be representative of all its citizens nor can it be effective in serving them."

Although few reliable statistics hae been compiled regarding the composition of the MUC workforce, those available indicate serious under-representation of cultural communities and visible minorities. No figures are available on the linguistic background of the MUC employees.

In a series of recommendations, the Alliance called for the implementation of a policy of equal opportunity employment, including the elimination of unfair hiring procedures, and the implementation of affirmative action programmes for members of the English-speaking community as well as for the cultural communities and visible minorities. While the brief noted that "competence in French is a necessary requirement for work within the MUC," it asked that "language programmes...be set up as part of the training process to enable candidates to fulfill these requirements. This can involve such measures as longer probation periods or work-study programmes."

The brief also recommended that a special department should be established "to devise and oversee the implementation of the affirmative action programmes." An ombudsman's office should also be set up to "receive complaints about unfair hiring and promotion practices, as well as allegations of discriminatory behaviour on the part of MUC employees."

Finally, the Alliance recommended that service to the community be improved. For example, translating MUC documents into English and into other languges where appropriate should be standard practice within the MUC. Frontline employees should also be able to provide services in English as well as French, and in other languages where required.

The Alliance was represented at the hearing before the ACIIR by Alan DeSousa, member of the Executive Committee, and Egan Chambers.

*(Copies of the brief submitted to ACIIR are available from the Provincial office on request).*

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## SCHOOL ELECTIONS AND EDUCATION ACTS

The following is a brief summary of Bill 106 (An Act respecting school elections) and Bill 107 (Education Act). In the latter, sections are organized into a more coherent structure permitting easier reference under the following headings: a) pupils, b) teachers, c) schools, including principals, d) school boards and e) the Government and Minister of Education. All matters pertaining to school board elections are now found in a new bill, Bill 106.

1. Students must attend school until age 16.

2. Teachers have specific rights and responsibilities stated in the legislation.

3. The principal is the educational leader of the school with responsibilities for its management and for the quality of educational services it offers.

4. An orientation committee must be established in each school. The majority of members, as well as the chairperson, are parents. Other members include teachers, support staff and, at the secondary level, students from the school.

   The orientation committee prepares an educational plan setting out the objectives the objectives of the school, which it submits to the school board.

   In addition, it is consulted by the board and/or principal regarding various aspects of the school's operation.

5. Parents in any school may establish a school committee from which a representative to the parents' committee is chosen. When a school committee is not formed, the parent representative is chosen by the orientation committee.

6. School boards will be reorganized along linguistic lines with the creation of French and English boards in the province.

7. Certain existing school boards are protected by the Canadian Constitution, and they will continue to exist. They include four confessional boards (PSBGM, CECM, Greater Quebec and CECQ) and five dissentient boards (Baie Comeau, Laurentian, Rouyn, Greenfield Park Catholic and Portage du Fort).

8. Confessionality will be attached to the board level only in the confessional and dissentient boards listed in 7, above. However, within linguistic systems, the Protestant and Catholic committees ofthe Superior Council of Education will continue to have the power to recognize a school which wishes to declare its confessional status.

9. Linguistic school boards will not be created until the courts have ruled on a series of questions to be submitted by the Government on the nature and extent of the powers of the National Assembly in matters concerning education. Reference to the courts will happen only after the legislation is adopted which the Government anticipates to be in the fall of 1988. Until the courts have ruled, education services will continue to be provided by presently existing Protestant and Catholic boards.

10. Until linguistic boards are implemented, the representation of English or French linguistic minorities on school boards will be increased in two ways: 1) a parent representative to the board will be named and 2) the Minister can create new seats on a board to represent, among others, the linguistic minority.

11. Parent delegates to the board will represent a) the elementary sector, b) the secondary sector and c) following from 10, above, the English or French linguistic minority. All parent representatives will have the right to vote.

12. A voter must be entered on the electoral list where he lives or where he or his child is enrolled in school.

13. Changes to the electoral process include:
a) candidates may be grouped on a ticket;
b) vacancies of more than twelve months are to be filled by by-election; and,
c) candidates receiving at least 20% of the votes are entitled to have certain election expenses reimbursed.

A parliamentary commission will be held to study the legislation beginning in April 1988.

*Adapted from SRTA Newsletter.*

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## FILM LAW ALARMS ALLIANCE

At present, Quebecers enjoy the unique advantage of seeing American films at the same time as they are released in New York and European films as soon as they are released in Paris.

The recent amendments to Quebec's Cinema Act, notably the changes to Article 83 which controls the exhibition of films, probably means that all Quebecers will see fewer films in the future.

These amendments were passed by the National Assembly in December with virtually no advance notice or public debate. This is doubly disturbing because there has been no public discussion or assessment of the impact of the current law enacted in 1983.

Alliance Quebec is concerned that the social and cultural needs of the English-speaking community have not been given due consideration in the formulation of the amendments to this legislation. A community maintains its vibrancy and dynamism by remaining in the mainstream of popular and intellectual cultural currents. The amended law appears to compromise this.

The amended law specifies that when there is no contract to provide a French version, distributors will be allowed to exhibit only one print, for a period of time to be determined by regulation.

Surely no one can reasonably consider that the exhibition of a single print would constitute timely access for the 800,000 English-speaking Quebecers spread

across the province let alone French-speaking Quebecers who would prefer to see a film in its original version.

According to the Régie du Cinéma, the effect of the 1983 legislation has been to reduce the delay between the showing of the original English language film and showing the French version from nine months to two. But, the legislation has not resulted in any significant increase in the number of films dubbed or sub-titled in French. In short, big box office successes are translated more quickly, but the availability of French language versions has not been increased.

Distributors and exhibitors have apparently been withdrawing some non-French language films from the Quebec market before the expiration of the sixty-day delay after which a French language version must be available. The companies that control exhibition of feature films are largely motivated by whether or not it is economically viable to make a non-English version of an English language feature film. Consequently French language versions are made only when there is an expectation of major commercial success.

Regardless of how one may feel about this situation, it is highly unlikely that the amended law will achieve the government's stated goal of increasing the number of films available in a French version. By toughening the requirements for providing a French version, the likely result is that distributors will do one of two things: 1) they will simply not make the less commercially viable films available in either language in Quebec, or 2) they will make them available many months later at the time of the European release. This means that films now withdrawn before the sixty-day delay may not come to Quebec at all or will be significantly delayed.

The amended law also seems to permit only as many English language prints to be exhibited as there are prints of French language versions being shown. This insistence on numerical parity ignores the cultural diversity of our society. Some films will be more appealing to one community than to another and therefore more successful in one language than in another.
Many comedies, for example, loose their impact in dubbed versions. The blind game of numerical parity under the guise of equality is effectively discriminatory and unfair.

Furthermore, although it seems clear that the law is aimed primarily at the major American film producers and distributors, the legislation, both in its current and amended forms, catches in its net all non-French language domestic and foreign films which have not been dubbed into French. This includes much of the world's film production outside of the United States.

It should also be noted that art, documentary, educational and industrial films typically have a small market, and it is unlikely that distributors will provide French language versions of such films.

The affect of the law on English language films produced in Canada, including Quebec, is particularly ironic. The problems experienced by the National Film Board with regard to making its English language documentary and educatonal films available in Quebec have recently made news headlines. Similar problems exist for private non-feature film

producers. Educational institutions, community groups, libraries and so on in Quebec will have less and less access to these kinds of films.

Also the likely impact of the amended law will be to make the exhibition of Canadian English language feature films much more difficult. Canadian film producers are under considerable financial constraints and many of their films are not evaluated by distributors as sufficiently profitable to warrant the extra cost of providing French language versions. Given the fragile nature of the Canadian English language feature film- industry, the loss of the Quebec market will be a severe blow.

To make matters worse, the amended law excludes sub-titling as an acceptable way of providing a French version. This will restrict even further the availability of films which are not major commercial successes. Sub-titling is the most expeditious and cheapest way of providing a version in another language and many film-makers and film goers prefer this method.

The problems discussed here are inherent in the law. They cannot be corrected by regulation. Surely Quebecers should not be dependent on the exercise of administrative and bureaucratic discretion to decide the films they see. The government should assume its responsibilities and legislate clearly.

Quebec could well become a film backwater where the only non-French language films generally available in their original language or
in a French version will be the major American box office successes.

Most importantly, this legislation raises serious concerns about fundamental rights such as the free flow of ideas, artistic freedom, access to culture and freedom of expression.

These concerns can be summarized as follows:

Civil liberties and minority rights: The form and manner in which people take their leisure, culture and entertainment is an issue of individual choice which should not be unduly regulated or restrained by governments.

The English-speaking community of Quebec, and indeed all Quebecers with a first language other than French, have a right to expect free access to cultural materials and vehicles in their own language.

The rights of artists: Films are works of art. As such the rights of film makers should be respected. One of these rights is to have their work shown in its original format and the right to decide whether any other format will be used.

We believe that the law does not respect the fundamental freedom of expression of either the artist or the public.

These are fundamental values that a society denies at its peril. We are convinced that no matter how desirable the social and cultural objectives which may underlie legislation such as Article 83 of the Cinema Act and no matter how complex the issue at hand, there can be no justification for a law which attains these objectives at the expense of civil liberties.

We continue to believe that the appropriate means to promote the French language and culture is through positive incentive programmes and not through restrictions on other languages. There are surely better ways of achieving the government's goals in co-operation with the film industry.

We urge that the amended law not be promulgated and that a fundamental re-examination of the original law be undertaken.

If legislators find civil liberties too demanding and artistic rights too esoteric; surely they will at least understand that Quebecers do not want to see fewer films.

*(This article was prepared by Michael Bergman, an entertainment lawyer, journalist and member of the Alliance Quebec Cinema Law Committee, and Sheila Moore , Director of Cultural Affairs for the Alliance).*

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## Alliance Quebec Welcomes New Off-Island Animator

Alliance Quebec Executive Director Russ Williams is pleased to announce that Ruth Pelletier has joined the staff as the new Off-Island animator. Ms. Pelletier is a well-known community organizer, consumer advocate, and voice of the underdog. She joins A.Q. from CJAD radio station, where she worked as a Researcher/Producer. A native of Brownsburg, in the Lower Laurentians, she now makes her home in Lake of Two Mountains. Welcome aboard, Ruth!

**COMING EVENTS.....COMING EVENTS.....COMING EVENTS.....**

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| *February 27* - | South Shore Gala - the second annual gala featuring three one-act plays, art displays, and lots more. For more information, call 465-5200. |
| *February 27* - | South West Gala - the first annual Studio South West Gala featuring local artists, live entertainment, and lots more. For more information, call Susan Becker at 766-6601. |
| *February 27* - | Alliance Quebec Board meeting in Quebec City. |
| *February 29* - | Education meeting - Montreal Chapters, for further information please call your local chapter office. |
| *February 29* - | Education meeting - St. Laurent Chapter |
| *March 2* - | Education meeting on Bill 106 and 107 to be held at 880 Hudson, Greenfield Park |
| *March 8* - | Centaur Theatre Evening - for further information please call 845-8127 |
| *March 12* - | Community Development Seminar |